



## SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN INDIA-SOME REFLECTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

National development and a growing economy depend on a skilled work-force. This assumes special importance in India as our country has the privilege of being the youngest nation in the world where 50% of its population is below the age of 30 years. It is estimated that this working age group (15-59 years) is likely to be more than 64% by 2021 and India will have 25% of the world's total work force by 2025. On 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2015, the prime-minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi stated, "Skilling is building a better India".

The unemployment rate in India was 4.9% in early 2014 and this percentage becomes huge when seen in absolute terms. The rate of unemployment among graduates was 18% in 2011-2012 (IHD Report, 2014). It was also observed that 60% of graduates were underemployed which means that their work did not need graduate skills. (Aggarwal, 2009). There is a huge section of the work force in our country who are unemployable as they do not meet the skill requirements of the employers inspite of having undergone training. Our country has Industrial Training Institutes (ITI's), Polytechniques, Vocational Training Centres, self-financed courses in the higher education system yet there is a shortage of skilled workers in the country.

The Centre and the State have made extensive efforts in this direction in urban and rural India and which is continuing on an on-going basis. It is imperative that all stake-holders join hands to ensure effective implementation of the skill development programmes. The major initiatives taken by the government and private players have been discussed in the paper.

The author has given various suggestions to intensify the skill development initiatives which is the need of the hour in order to build a strong national economy.

**KEY WORDS:** skill development, initiatives, India, education

### Introduction

National development and a growing economy depend on a skilled work-force. This assumes special importance in India as our country has the privilege of being the youngest nation in the world where 50% of its population is below the age of 30 years. It is estimated that this working age group (15-59 years) is likely to be more than 64% by 2021 and India will have 25% of the world's total work force by 2025. Keeping this scenario in mind the whole momentum for skill development has to increase. The idea of skill development is not new, in the pre-independent era Gandhiji's scheme of Basic-Education focused on skill development through craft education. On 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2015, the prime-minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi stated, "Skilling is building a better India". If we have to move India towards development then skill development should be our mission. Presently our prime-minister's emphasis is on 'Make in India' and his objective is to make India the 'Skill Capital of the world'.

### Skill Development: The Need of the Hour

There is no doubt that down the years there has been a decline in the unemployment rates. The unemployment rate declined to 6.6 per cent in 2009-10 for the first time since 1993-94, after increasing to 7.31 per cent in 1999-2000 and 8.28 per cent in 2004-05. The unemployment rate was 4.9% in early 2014, but this percentage becomes huge when seen in absolute terms. The rate of unemployment among graduates was 18% in 2011-2012 (IHD Report, 2014). It was also observed that 60% of graduates were underemployed which means that their work did not need graduate skills. (Aggarwal, 2009). There is a huge section of the work force in our country who are unemployable as they do not meet the skill requirements of the employers inspite of having undergone training. Our country has Industrial Training Institutes (ITI's), Polytechniques, Vocational Training Centres, self-financed courses in the higher education system, yet there is a shortage of skilled workers in the country. In India only 10% in the age group of (15-29 yrs) receive vocational training as compared to 68% in the UK, 75% in Germany, 52% in USA, 80% in Japan, 96% in South Korea and 28% in a developing country like Mexico. (NKC Report, 2009). A long time ago Mahatma Gandhi had made this iconic statement that 'India lives in its villages', which is the present reality. According to the 2011 census report 68.84 percent of India's population lives in the rural areas and are engaged in low paid jobs due to lack of education and training. In our country 92 per cent of the workforces are engaged in the informal sector (IHD Report, 2014). Therefore, skill training efforts in India has to increase to meet unemployment needs, through self-employment, entrepreneurship and make the youth more employable. The skill development scenario in the country seems to be changing slowly but steadily. Team India won 9 medallions at the world skill competition in Brazil recently.

### Skill Development -Initiatives

On the World Youth Skill Day (15 July, 2015) the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi launched the National Skill Development Mission and the new National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 came into existence. A National Policy on Skill Development was also formulated in 2009 laying emphasis on skill development.

The Centre and the State have made extensive efforts in this direction in urban and rural India and which is continuing on an on-going basis. The major initiatives have been discussed below.

### Higher Education

It has been strongly recommended that all higher education courses must have a skill orientation to make our youth more employable. The higher education system in India is one of the largest in the world next only to the United States and China. There are 700 universities, 35,539 colleges, 2, 03, 27,000 students and 9,33, 761 teachers. (UGC Annual Report, 2012). Such a large system has ample scope to offer courses for skill development and it is being utilized today. Higher education institutions today offer various self-financed courses related to Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Agriculture, Social Sciences, Medical Sciences amongst others.

The first community college opened in the University of Pondicherry in the year 1995. These colleges had started with the objective of imparting skill education to the weaker sections of the society. The Indian Centre for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE), Chennai has taken a lead in this direction since 1998. The Community colleges give Certificates, Diplomas and Associate degrees after secondary and before under graduation. The courses are credit based in modular form, easy to access and flexible. There are around 500 of these colleges functioning in the country, Tamil Nadu having the highest number. In 2012 the government had planned to start 200 community colleges from the academic session 2013-14 on a trial basis in the existing colleges and Polytechniques.

### Vocationalizing School Education

The post-independent era saw several initiatives by the government and non-governmental agencies to develop skills at the secondary and higher secondary levels of school education. Efforts were made to vocationalize school education in India with an objective of individuals being able to earn a living after they leave school. However this initiative did not prove to be successful due to various reasons and is now being revamped. There are serious attempts being made in the Twelfth Plan to give a new approach to vocational education.

In schools, the vocational courses offered by ministries, vocational institutes, private bodies could be in modular form, using schools as an important platform. At the secondary level, from class IX, Vocational Education courses will be based on national occupation standard brought out by the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs). At the higher secondary level, a separate Pilot programme within the National Vocational Qualifications Framework has been launched in Haryana. Assam, West Bengal and Karnataka are also in the process of launching a pilot study. Classes IX and X in the pilot schools of Haryana offer two vocational subjects out of IT, Retail, Automobile and Security. The Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) under NSDC have taken the responsibility of designing the curriculum and the content development has been done by CBSE and other agencies. The teachers are recruited on a contract basis, have been given pedagogy training and principals have been oriented. Linkage with the industry is maintained by the vocational co-coordinators of the school. Assessment will be done by Board of School Education Haryana and assessors of respective SSCs.

A separate vocational cell has been established within the Central Board of Secondary Education.

#### The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)

The National Skill Development Corporation, (NSDC) in India falls under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship. It aims at providing Public-Private Partnership model to promote skill development by acting as a catalyst for the creation of large, quality, for-profit vocational institutions. NSDC provides funding to build scalable, for-profit vocational training initiatives. It supports systems such as quality assurance, information systems and trains the trainer academies either directly or through partnerships. NSDC acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to private enterprises, companies and organizations that provide skill training. The courses offered by the training partners are aligned with national occupational standards (NOS) under National Skill Qualification Framework (NSFQ) and these standards are created by Sector Skill Councils (SSC). It has a target to train 150 million people by 2022.

#### SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE SCHEME (SDIS)

The Skill Development Initiative Scheme was launched by the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Government of India. Its target audience includes school leavers, workers, ITI graduates etc. and it offers short term training courses based on Modular Employable Skills (MES) which is a minimum skill set adequate for employment. The delivery mechanism is flexible (on-line, off-line, part-time, week-ends) and training is provided by the state government, private sector, industry etc. and assessment is done by independent bodies. These courses are available after class V and class VIII and certification is recognized nationally and internationally. These courses are related to automobile, retail, beauty therapy, construction, Indian food and Snacks amongst several others.

#### Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

This is the skill training scheme launched by the Ministry of Skill Development & entrepreneurship on 15th July 2015 with an outlay of Rs.1500 crore. The scheme will be implemented through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and will give training to an estimated 24 lakhs over the next year. Training will be carried out against National Occupational Standards by the Sector Skill Councils and Third Party Assessment will be done to a target group of school drop-outs. This training will be aligned with the demands of the flagship programmes of the government like Swatch Bharat, Make in India, Digital India, Solar Mission etc. Under the scheme, monetary reward would be provided to trainees who are successfully trained, assessed and certified in skill courses run by affiliated training providers. Its implementation started in Bihar in June 2015.

It has been recently announced that under PMKVY, an estimated 10 lakh youth will be trained in engineering skills at AICTE approved engineering colleges and Polytechnics in the next three years. The objective here is to avail the higher education infrastructure and give employable and certifiable work skill and soft skill training to the school drop-outs during the off hours. The HRD ministry will spend approximately Rs.4825 as per pupil cost and a web-based management online system for monitoring purposes will be developed.

#### Skill Development Programmes for the Rural Youth

The Ministry of Rural Development, government of India has initiated a special skill development programme for the rural youth living below the poverty line under Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY-SP) and RUDSETI for setting up adequate infrastructure in each district in the country for skill training with a strong focus on entrepreneurial development. The SGSY has been restructured and renamed NRLM/Aajeevika (National Rural Livelihoods Mission) which emphasizes on maximizing the potential of the rural poor.

Himayat is another programme for skill development launched by the Ministry of Rural Development for the youth from Jammu and Kashmir. This scheme aims to cover 1 lakh youth from Jammu and Kashmir in the next 5 years and will be implemented through competent training providers, from the private sector.

Parvaaz is another pilot programme on 'Comprehensive Skills and Education Program for Rural BPL Minority Youth' initiated by the Ministry of Rural Development. The objective is to empower the minority BPL youth of the country with knowledge and skill and bridge the 'social divide'

#### Private Initiatives

The private players which include NGOs, industry, educational institutions have been involved in giving skill training to school and college drop-outs, school or college pass-outs or to individuals with no formal education.

A recent initiative has been by the madrassas across Bihar and Maharashtra to impart skill training to 1200 Muslim youths by integrating with the government run Maulana Azad National Academy for skills (MANAS) with an objective of self-employment.

#### Gujarat Initiatives

Gujarat state has vocational training institutes called 'Kaushalya Vardhan Kendra' run by the state in many of its villages to provide skill training to the rural youth. This model has been appreciated by policy makers and is recommended that it be adopted outside the state of Gujarat.

A recent private initiative involves the Gujarat State Fertilizer Company planning to start the first National Institute of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (NISDE) at Dumad, in the outskirts of Vadodara. The institute will receive technical and academic cooperation from Chinese experts for its activities and projects.

#### Suggestions

- It is without doubt that a lot of initiatives are being taken and a lot of efforts are being made to improve the skill development landscape in India. However we need to accelerate the skill development movement in our country. The author has offered some suggestions in this regard.
- There needs to be a paradigm shift. An attitudinal change in the way the society thinks is required. The community of parents has to be oriented that vocational courses are not like second class citizens meant only for the unprivileged. Skill development for various jobs based on the interest and aptitude leads to self-reliance and a life of dignity can be led.
- The general Arts and Science courses taught presently in most of the higher education institutions is theoretical and lacks the orientation to skill development which is relevant in today's scenario. The Vocationalization of the existing courses becomes important in the view that more than 50% of the students are enrolled for Arts and Science courses (UGC Report, 2012). University courses need to be revised in terms of skill component by the way of more practicum and internship. Our general courses of Arts, Science, Commerce do not inculcate adequate skills to make our students job ready. Several private institutions were asked to close down due to lack of giving practical exposure in laboratories. However some universities like the Team Lease Skill University in Gujarat have taken a step in this direction.
- The objective of the community colleges has been to offer skill training to the poor and underprivileged sections of the society. However this thinking needs to change in the present context where skill training is the need of nation. All the learners in schools need to be given rigorous orientation on the courses offered by the community colleges irrespective of their class and background.
- Schools, colleges and universities can play a vital role in dissemination of information of the vocational programmes and also take students to them for visits of skill training institutions. The career-counseling programmes in schools and higher education institutions in rural and urban areas need to focus on all the vocational programmes offered by various institutions and ministries.
- There needs to be a constant updating of training programmes and syllabi periodically to ensure that the youth are exposed to the latest technology and industry practices and business environment.
- Effective and timely monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the skill development programmes need to be given due emphasis. Feedback from the target groups need to be considered to bring about qualitative improvement.
- More research studies need to be conducted by higher education and independent research institutions to find out the status of skill development programmes launched by the government and private players.
- There is a dire need to bring best practices from the different corners of the globe to India's skilling ecosystem. The developed countries are far ahead of us so far the enrollment and quality skill development is concerned.
- The Centre and the States of India need to create good infrastructural facilities i.e. roads, power, buildings etc. to kick-start and sustain skill development programmes. There are district towns in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the power only comes for a few hours.
- India can be the largest provider of skilled work-force if mapping of manpower requirements nationally and globally is carried out. The employment

in Agriculture, Manufacturing, Non-Manufacturing and Services in 1999-2000 was 59.9%, 11.1%, 5.3%, and 23.7%, whereas in 2009-2010 it was 53.2%, 11.0%, 10.5% and 25.3% respectively (NSS, various rounds). In the agriculture and manufacturing sectors a negative elasticity has been witnessed in the latter part of the decade so far as employment is concerned. It could be because of job opportunities having increased in the other sectors. Therefore observing job trends based on available data and mapping skill requirements nationally and internationally which takes care of supply and demand becomes imperative.

- According to the NSDC report on Education there is a massive requirement of 86,64,000 teachers and trainers between 2008 and 2022. This challenge has to be met with training the trainers on a mission mode. The quality of skill training imparted depends on the quality of the teachers and trainers to a large extent.
- The Indian Bank Association in liaison with the NSDC is thinking of giving skill loans to students for vocational courses in the range of Rs. 20,000 to 1.5 lakhs. These plans need to be expedited by the Centre as there is no time to lose.
- It is required that both public sector and private sector organizations invest in the skill training as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. As per the requirement of the law The PSUs with about 100 crore profit are to invest about 5 per cent in skill training. The centre and state need to develop monitoring mechanisms to observe if these responsibilities are being effectively met.

### Conclusion

There is no doubt that the government of India is giving impetus to skill development for the urban and rural youth. The policies and programmes by it-self may not work unless effective implementation and monitoring is ensured by all stakeholders. There is hope in the country that the war against poverty and unemployment can be won by skilling the youth of India.

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